

# Land Use Element

City of La Cañada Flintridge

Adopted: November 15, 1993



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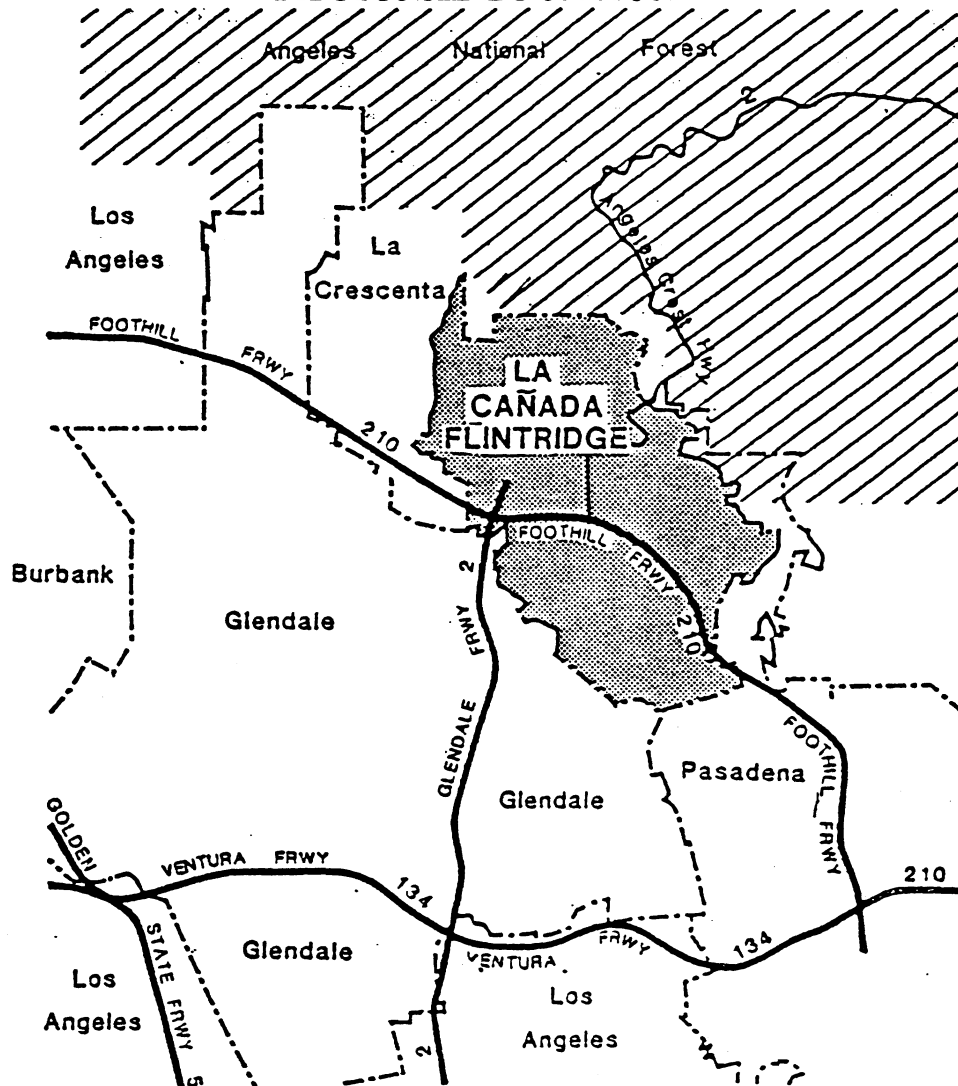
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## INTRODUCTION TO LAND USE ELEMENT

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The City of La Cañada Flintridge, incorporated in 1976, is located in Los Angeles County, approximately 13 miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles. The City encompasses approximately 8.6 square miles and is surrounded by the City of Pasadena to the east, the City of Glendale to the south, the Angeles National Forest to the north, and the unincorporated county areas of La Crescenta and Montrose to the west.

**FIGURE LU-1  
REGIONAL LOCATION**



Prior to incorporation in 1976, the La Cañada Flintridge area was already fully developed and well-established as the two county areas of La Cañada on the north and Flintridge on the south. In the 1920s, developers began to subdivide the land and attract buyers. The largest subdivisions included Alta Canyon, developed by Edwin T. Earl (inventor of the refrigerated fruit railroad car), Descanso/Central La Cañada carved out of the Lanterman family holdings, and Flintridge, laid out by U.S. Senator Frank P. Flint.

During the regional building boom years of the late 1940's and early 1950's, limited growth in La Cañada Flintridge was the result of insufficient water supply and water rights which was translated into Los Angeles County's 1948 Zoning Code provisions. Although the Foothill Municipal Water District was annexed to the Los Angeles Metropolitan Water District (MWD) in 1953, major land development patterns were already established in the City by this time. Further growth in the region through the 1950's and 1960's was frequently driven by the accessibility of freeways, but the Glendale (2) Freeway and 210 Freeway were not completed through La Cañada Flintridge until the early 1970's.

Today La Cañada Flintridge's adopted policy is to retain the community's natural and semi-rural character. In addition, the presence of environmental and infrastructure constraints (i.e., hillside topography, wildfire hazards, lack of sanitary sewers) on much of the remaining vacant land in the City precludes extensive development. In 1980, the City's total population was 20,153; in 1990, the total was 19,378. Nearly 90 percent of the City's developed parcels consist of single-family residential uses, generally on large lots (one-quarter acre or more) with heavily landscaped streets. Regional and local commercial uses are limited to some portions of Foothill Boulevard and Verdugo Boulevard. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, located in the easternmost part of the community, is the City's largest employer. Growth continues to be limited to small residential subdivisions, residential infill, and recycling of commercial uses on Foothill Boulevard.

## PURPOSE

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California Planning, Zoning, and Development Laws, compiled and published by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, require every jurisdiction to prepare and adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan to guide physical development in its jurisdiction, including any land

outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning.

The land use element is intended to describe present and planned land use activity and to address the relationship between land uses and environmental quality, potential hazards, and the City's social, educational, recreational and economic objectives. In accordance with State planning law (Government Code 65300 *et seq.*), the land use element must include the following:

- Proposed general distribution, location, and extent of land for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings and grounds, solid and liquid waste disposal facilities, and other applicable types of public and private land use. A land use policy map illustrating this information must accompany the element's text.
- Quantifiable standards of population density (e.g., dwelling units per acre, population per household) and building intensity (e.g., limits on floor area ratio, lot coverage, or height) for each applicable land use designation;
- Identification of areas subject to flooding;
- In areas with mineral resources of regional or statewide significance, establishment of mineral resource management policies; and
- Analysis and policy direction relevant to other areas related to the physical development of the jurisdiction.

The La Cañada Flintridge Land Use Element defines the official City policy for the location of land uses and their orderly growth and development. The element serves as a guide for public officials and citizens to determine suitable development within La Cañada Flintridge.

## RELATED PLANS AND PROGRAMS

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Due to the comprehensive nature of the Land Use Element, land use issues are not addressed in the same detail as they typically would be addressed in certain physical planning documents, plans, and ordinances which the City can adopt. The land use categories described in this element indicate general categories of permissible uses and development intensities allowed within each category. Other documents, including the zoning ordinance, establish more specific regulations and policies influencing development.

In addition to many of these locally adopted plans, ordinances, and regulations that concentrate on issues confronting an individual jurisdiction, a number of regional plans affect the City. Regional planning agencies such as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) recognize that planning issues extend beyond the boundaries of individual cities. Efforts to address regional planning issues such as affordable housing, transportation, and air pollution have resulted in the adoption of regional plans which affect La Cañada Flintridge. Relevant regional plans are discussed briefly in the following paragraphs to indicate the relationship of the plans to this General Plan.

**City Zoning Ordinance:** The zoning ordinance is the principal method by which jurisdictions regulate land uses, building and lot sizes, building heights, and development character. A zoning ordinance consists of two primary components: (1) a map that delineates the boundaries of districts in which like uses developed at like standards are permitted, and (2) text that explains the purpose of the zoning district, lists the permitted uses and those permitted under special conditions, and standards for development - such as minimum lot size, density, height, setbacks, lot coverage, and parking requirements. Each general plan land use category should be implemented by one or more corresponding zoning classifications. By law, the zoning ordinance must be consistent with the general plan.

The City of La Cañada Flintridge adopted by reference the County of Los Angeles Zoning Ordinance (Ordinance No. 1494) on April 4, 1977, four months after the City's

incorporation. Since that time, numerous City ordinances have revised, amended, or repealed portions of the County zoning ordinance to more closely reflect specific conditions and plans of the City.

**Foothill Boulevard Master Plan:** The Foothill Boulevard Master Plan, accepted by the City Council in November 1991, sets forth a vision for Foothill Boulevard which is rooted in preserving and enhancing a small-scale, pedestrian-oriented atmosphere. The City expects Foothill Boulevard to remain commercially oriented, serving primarily local needs, but also including some subregional merchants. To support the vision of a village character, the Master Plan studied the existing land use patterns on Foothill Boulevard and recommends general land use objectives, as well as focused land use objectives on a block-by-block basis.

To help identify existing and preferred land use patterns, the Master Plan recognizes five distinct districts along Foothill Boulevard within La Cañada Flintridge: West Gateway, The Link, Old Town, Downtown, and Michigan Hill. The Master Plan recommendations have been integrated into the General Plan Land Use Element and land use policy map by adopting goals, policies, and land use designations consistent with the Master Plan.

**Redevelopment Plan:** The City's Redevelopment Agency was formed in 1985, but due to a variety of economic and social reasons no project area has been adopted. The Agency could be empowered under state law to assemble lots, improve private properties, and finance development projects.

**Regional Plans:** In the latter half of the 1980s, growing regional concern and legislation regarding traffic, air pollution, rising housing costs, and other issues affecting the Southern California community as a whole led SCAG to prepare comprehensive regional plans which address these concerns. Four plans which affect planning in La Cañada Flintridge include SCAG's *Regional Mobility Plan*; *Growth Management Plan*; the California Regional Water Quality Control Board's (RWQCB) *Water Quality Control Plan for Region (4), Los Angeles River Basin (4B)*; and the *Air Quality Management Plan*, prepared by the South Coast Air

Quality Management District (SCAQMD). These four plans are intended to work in concert to reduce traffic congestion and pollutant levels basinwide. Planning strategies focus on reducing automobile and truck traffic on the regional transportation network, as well as at local levels, and reducing the potential for new groundwater contamination.

La Cañada Flintridge has included in this General Plan relevant policies and programs which reflect and respond to SCAG's and SCAQMD's regional goals and the RWQCB's Los Angeles Basin Policy. In particular, policies in the Land Use Element addresses regional jobs/housing balance objectives by expanding opportunities for local serving commercial uses, and providing higher intensity residential uses within walking distance of services and public transit. Sewers are recommended to enhance the quality of life in both commercial and residential areas.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

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The Land Use Element is divided into four sections:

- Existing Land Use Characteristics;
- Land Use Study Areas;
- Land Use Goals and Policies; and
- Land Use Plan and Policy Map.

Section I, Existing Land Use Characteristics, describes typical land uses, including residential, commercial, educational and community facilities, parks and recreation facilities, vacant lands, and transportation facilities, located within the community. Section II, Land Use Study Areas, utilizes this data to highlight land use issues confronting the City and establishes the framework for goal formulation and policy and program development contained in Section III. The Land Use Plan contained in Section IV identifies how land use policy will be implemented in La Cañada Flintridge.

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

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A major goal of the La Cañada Flintridge General Plan update is to achieve internal consistency throughout all of the General Plan elements. Since a jurisdiction's land use element defines how land will be utilized, it integrates and synthesizes most of the issues and policies contained in the other general plan elements.

The Land Use Element relates to the *Housing Element* by defining the extent and density of future residential development. The Land Use Element is also coordinated with the City's *Environmental Resource Management Element* in that open space and recreational resources are designated on the Land Use Policy Map, and environmental factors (e.g., natural resources, environmental constraints) are considered in locating land use types. The *Safety* and *Noise* elements identify public safety and noise constraints, which result in policies applicable to specific geographic locations and land uses. The *Circulation* and Land Use elements are interrelated in that specific land use decisions depend upon the circulation system's ability to adequately and efficiently accommodate anticipated traffic. Finally, the Land Use Element defines permitted uses so that the *Community Design Element* can help translate those possibilities into well-designed, visually pleasing results.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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The public plays an important role in both the preparation and implementation phases of the General Plan. Because the General Plan reflects community goals and objectives, citizens must be involved with issues identification and goals formulation. The La Cañada Flintridge Land Use Element update involved an extensive community participation program which formed the basis of the Element's policy direction (see 1993 General Plan Update, Appendix A - Public Participation).

The City Council appointed a General Plan Advisory Committee at the start of the update process to provide input into both the Land Use and Housing elements. The

Advisory Committee was comprised of nine City residents representing a diversity of viewpoints on land use issues facing the community; a list of Committee participants is included in the introductory pages of the Land Use Element.

City staff conducted a series of meetings over a period of six months with the Advisory Committee to develop consensus recommendations on the six land use study areas, and to review the draft Land Use Element. The Committee also provided direct input into the preparation of the Housing Element. Committee recommendations are set forth in the section entitled: "Land Use Study Areas," and are reflected in the Element's goals and policies. Specific recommendations for each topic area, including suggested modifications to the zoning ordinance, are included as an appendix to the Element.

Once the Committee developed its recommendations for each of the study areas, the City conducted a public workshop to share the recommended land use policy. Each Committee member presented an overview of one of the issue areas to the public, and explained the group's recommendations. Subsequent to the presentations, the public dispersed into small roundtable discussions to provide the Committee with their input.

A joint workshop was conducted with the City Council and Planning Commission to provide the opportunity for discussion of the modifications to the Land Use Element prior to the public hearings.

Copies of the public hearing draft Land Use Element were distributed to interested agencies and individuals, and copies were available for review and purchase at City Hall. The Land Use Element underwent additional review and revisions as a result of public hearings held before the Planning Commission and City Council.

households in the City headed by a senior. Projections for the year 2000 indicate that this trend will continue, and approximately 20% of the City's population will be over 65 years of age. Compounding this trend is an increased life expectancy for seniors, indicating that many of today's seniors will be living much longer and that their needs as they age may become more complex based on this longevity.

While State requirements for General Plans recognize seniors as a special needs group for a variety of reasons, the key aspects of aging which apply to seniors in La Cañada Flintridge are somewhat different due to the socio-economic status of most City residents. The generally affluent, homeowners of the community have acquired longer term assets and income resources which increase their options for housing and support services as they age.

The City's goals for balanced development must be consistent with providing options for its aging citizens. As seniors' needs evolve several long term land use issues are raised with respect to extent of needs, appropriate types of facilities, and design, location, and potential market to support such facilities.

### Long Term Needs of Seniors Policy Direction

The increasing proportion of older residents in the City warrants additional study and potential policy direction. Both future land use and housing strategies may be required to retain seniors in the community as their life cycle progresses. To this end, the City should establish a study which addresses the following questions:

- Is there a long term need in La Cañada Flintridge for senior housing and support services? To what extent can such needs be suitably served within the City?
- What alternative types of accommodations and design are appropriate to the wooded, low density character of La Cañada Flintridge?

- What are the characteristics of an appropriate location in the City for such alternatives? Is there a need for an overlay to encourage private development to create such alternatives within the community?
- What is the long term market for La Cañada Flintridge and surrounding areas for such alternatives? To what extent will the alternatives which are appropriate to La Cañada Flintridge be substantially different from accommodations or services provided by surrounding communities in order to make them a land use priority to the City?